Youth Scholars, Skills & Service (YS3)

During the 2015-2016 school year, Youth Scholars, Skills and Service (YS3) served 396 youth in Illinois foster care and 100% of graduates transitioned into college, vocational training and/or employment.

YS3 Vision
Empower youth to become lifelong scholars and generous global change makers.

YS3 Mission
Building strong foundations for successful transitions into adulthood

We seek to help youth in foster care who previously dropped out of school:

- Create and maintain healthy relationships,
- Learn social and emotional skills,
- Gain exposure to global culture,
- Graduate from High School or obtain their GED,
- Be prepared to face the challenges and opportunities of adulthood.

We accomplish this by providing:

- World-class academic enrichment and acceleration,
- Nurturing and relevant mentoring,
- Resourceful and diligent advocacy.

About
(YS3) Youth Scholars, Skills and Service Program is a collaboration between the Alternative Schools Network and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to provide educational and social services to older, out of school foster care youth. YS3 serves out of school youth in foster care from the ages of 15-21 who are interested in returning to school and earning a high school diploma or GED. The program is coordinated through 15 community based alternative high schools.

In addition to educational services, youth receive wrap around services, which include:

- Life skills
- Scholarship Program
- College Preparation
- Leadership Training
- Computer Assisted Learning

Partnering with 15 participating schools spread across the city of Chicago, the YS3 Program provides year-round academic programming which includes an alternative education plan, GED preparation, small class sizes, and computer based assisted instruction.

At each school site, there is 1-2 full-time mentor(s) that work intensely with the youth enrolled in the YS3 program. Mentors build relationships with their students to ensure greater educational success.

Mentors also provide:

- Attendance and retention support services
- Coordination of school services
- Coordination of child welfare services
- Graduation and transition services
- A caring adult to model positive behavior and relationship building

Program is Distinctive
Each program site has one to two mentors working with 6-20 students at a time. The mentor’s role is to recruit and retain the youth to empower them to graduate from high school or earn their GED. When students do not show up for school, mentors actively seek to locate the student and re-engage them. Students are also provided opportunities for tutoring, counseling, extracurricular activities and employment. Social/Emotional learning and life skill development are cornerstones within our schools and the YS3 Program.

In addition to focusing on helping students navigate the school environment; mentors also assist youth in obtaining services from DCFS (e.g. obtaining clothing vouchers, scholarships, bus passes).

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Monetary Incentives for Students
Youth participating in the YS3 Program have opportunities to earn monetary incentives for passing or acing standardized tests, maintaining high grades, and other similar benchmarks. Mentors seek to help students find meaningful employment at the school or in partner organizations. We also encourage students to earn additional credits and monetary rewards for passing FuelEd Online Classes. Student may also receive incentives for taking life-skills classes on ExtraLearning Online (ELO). When students pass a course, they immediately earn $50 and accrue $200 towards a scholarship account.

Upon graduation, youth receive an additional $600 towards their scholarship account along with a laptop, which they can then apply for when they enter college or a vocational training program.

Next Steps for Enrollment
1. Locate a school near the student’s residence from the attached listing.
2. Contact the mentor(s) at the prospective school to schedule an initial interview to assess if the student can graduate or obtain their GED from the school.
3. You will need to provide:
   - Copies of identification (birth certificate, copy of ID, social security card, medical card),
   - Previous academic records,
   - IEPs (if applicable),
   - Any other relevant information needed by the school for assessment and possible enrollment.